The Bicycle Thief

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The Bicycle Thief

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Summary

Alana knows that Hannibal was a prodigy in multiple fields.

Medicine. Music. Art. Murder.

But she is shocked when she learns that he spent his formative years in Paris stealing bicycles.

Notes

Previously posted on Twitter

As Hannibal's psychiatrist, Alana was required to have thrice weekly therapy sessions with her patient.

Dr. Lecter was not a cooperative patient by any means. Alana had hoped to either get to the root of his trauma or to at least coax him into confessing his crimes. Instead she had entire recordings of him sitting completely still and silent for the duration of the session.

Even when Hannibal did choose to speak, it was typically nothing of actual substance. He once spent an entire week quoting ABBA lyrics, ending with a spirited speech of why he deemed "Dancing Queen" to be their best work and an critical part of 1970s musical history.

Another time, Hannibal had set about teaching Alana the entire pantheon of Lithuanian gods. She had always enjoyed mythology and had quite enjoyed those sessions, even going so far as to have him teach her how to properly pronounce the names. It had been very disappointing when she learned that he had taught her derogatory terms for genitalia from multiple languages.

"But you pronounced the words beautifully," he consoled when confronted with the truth. His mirth at her humiliation was evident.

One day after months of silence, she arrived to find him in a chatty mood. The change in disposition immediately placed her on edge. Hannibal was definitely up to something.

"Did I ever tell you that I was a prodigious bicycle thief during my time in Paris?"

The psychiatrist leaned back in her seat.

"Seems a little pedestrian for the Chesapeake Ripper."

"Yes, I imagine that it might seem that way but it was one of the most enjoyable hobbies that I have had. I would always steal a few whenever I returned to the city. I even found the time

when I was there with Bedelia."

Alana considered this for a moment.

"Tell me what you enjoy about it."

"Finding the right person's bicycle to steal is a challenging way to pass a day. Walking through the streets and the parks, observing the various riders, finding the ones who ignore traffic rules or endanger the safety of others, and then taking their possession when they leave it unattended."

"You stole the bicycles of the rude."

The smile that Hannibal gave her indicated that he thought this obvious.

"Of course, I had to have criteria for choosing the bicycle. It is not as if I was interested in the actual vehicle. I stole to punish the rude or the entitled. Once I stole a high end mountain bike that belonged to a man whose spandex shorts were indecent. I only stole from a child once but he was a particularly monstrous young brat. I was reminded of him every time I saw your son's father."

Alana ignored the bait about her child.

"How many bikes did you steal?"

"Two hundred sixty-seven."

Alana raised an eyebrow at that.

“What did you do with them?”

“It varied. Sometimes I gave them to poor children. Sometimes I threw them in the Seine. Often I rode them several miles away and simply parked them.”

“But you never sold them.”

“I did not need money. I once gave one to a girl that I wanted to sleep with. I gave one to my uncle for his birthday but only because I knew that he would enjoy it.”

“The bicycle for sex was transactional.”

Hannibal gave an elegant one shoulder shrug.

“She was quite attractive and had pledged to save herself for marriage. I was not above doing what I needed to do to convince her.”

“Did it work?”

“No,” he admitted with a smile and a slight laugh. Alana’s heart gave a slight tug. She had always enjoyed seeing her mentor confess to a rare failure. “I let her keep the bike, too, although years later I killed her husband.”

Alana felt her blood run cold. She had briefly forgotten who this man was.

“I threw him into the Seine, too.”

Of course he had.

“Another time I traded one on the black market,” he continued as if he had not just confessed to murder.

“What did you trade it for?”

“A bottle of Krasnaya Moskva.”

Alana was not familiar.

“Wine?”

“No, perfume,” he responded, both his tone and his face suddenly distant and withdrawn, all previous signs of humor gone.

Interesting.

“It was my mother’s favorite,” the serial killer added.

“And why did you decide to talk about this today?”

Another casual shoulder shrug.

“Today is her birthday. I wanted to share a memory of her.”

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The conversation stayed with Alana for several days after. Hannibal had seemed completely genuine but she knew better than most his talent for manipulation.

But yet she wanted to believe that her former friend was at least capable of having loved his mother.

She easily confirmed that March 1 had indeed been his mother's birthdate but then he would have known that she would check the records. Likewise, she had easily learned that Krasnaya Moskva had been widely available and popular in the Soviet Union.

A few days after their conversation, Jack Crawford finally returned her phone calls.

Alana informed him of the murder confession of the unidentified man. Jack agreed to notify the Gendarmerie. Bodies were pulled from the Seine regularly but maybe they could ask his former classmates if Hannibal had ever given them or someone they knew a bicycle.

He had laughed somewhat bitterly at the bicycle theft confession.

"Not much that we can do with that but I'll put it in his file. If he ever escapes again, the local police can be alerted to watch for an increase in bike thefts."

Alana grimaced at that, knowing what an escape would mean for her.

"One more question. Did you find a bottle of women's perfume among Hannibal's things?"

She waited while he pulled up an inventory of the Lecter house.

"Yes, there is a listing for a bottle of perfume with a Russian name. The bottle was nearly full but at least a couple decades old. The missing portion was deemed likely to be from evaporation rather than use."

Alana was quiet for a moment.

“What’s with the perfume?”

“It was apparently his mother’s favorite.”

“Can we use this?”

“Spray some on a piece of paper and mail it to me. I’d like to measure his reaction.”

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A few days later the unsealed envelope was delivered to Hannibal along with the rest of his mail.

Watching on camera, Alana saw him immediately stiffen as he picked up the scent. However, he waited until he had viewed the rest of his mail before slowly opening the envelope.

She watched as he deeply inhaled the fragrance. He closed his eyes briefly and she saw him wipe away a tear. He then looked to the camera and said “Thank you”.

Alana could not determine if what she had just witnessed was genuine. She knew that Hannibal was capable of love or at least what he believed to be love. She knew that olfactory memory is powerful and likely more so for a man with his strong sense of smell. She knew that he had successfully hid that he was a predator for several decades. She knew that he had manipulated her and countless others for years.

Still she wondered and deep inside she hoped.

If the Ripper had loved and continued to miss his mother, then maybe, just maybe, he might someday show her son and possibly even herself mercy.

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In his mind palace, Hannibal returned to the streets of Paris where he relived the murder of the husband of the woman who had rejected him.

A gentle rejection that he had allowed to go unanswered for exactly twenty years.

Hannibal had recently learned that Will Graham had taken a wife.

He would not wait so long to respond to Will's repudiation.

Alana had completely missed the warning for the as yet unknown woman. She had quite naively fallen for the feints that he had planted about his mother. He imagined that his former student was now hoping to appeal to his inner orphan for grace.

He would ensure that Alana knew she had Mrs. Graham's blood on her hands before dispatching of his psychiatrist.

Hannibal was still undecided about the fate of Alana's son.

He supposed that it would depend upon how much the boy reminded him of Mason Verger.

The End

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